

## Violence in the Workplace

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### Definition

- Violent acts, including physical assaults and threats of assault, written aggression directed toward persons at work or on duty.



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### WORKPLACE VIOLENCE IS

- Intended to physically or psychologically harm an individual or object.

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### CATEGORIES OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

- Violence by strangers
- Violence by customers/clients
- Violence by co-workers
- Violence by personal relations

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### STATISTICS - Homicide

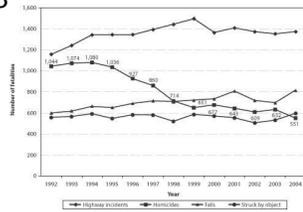
- #3 cause of workplace death
- Average of 500 deaths per year
- Cost to society of \$800,000 per death
- 1.7 million workers are injured every year in non-fatal workplace assaults
- ¾ deaths committed with a gun
- 67% associated with robbery

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## STATISTICS - Homicide cont.

- 16% of all deaths in the workplace in 2003



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## STATISTICS - Assaults

- Distributed equally among the sexes: 44% men, 56% women.
- 1.5 million assaults a year
- More assaults than homicides
- 2 million workers experience violence in some form every year (OSHA 2002)

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## STATISTICS - Assaults cont.

- Women are the victims in 80% of rapes and sexual assaults
- 29,000 acts of rape or sexual assault each year
- Est. one million women are stalked each year in the U.S.
- 1/4th of them report missing work as a result of the stalking, missing an average of eleven days

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## FACTORS THAT INCREASE RISK

- Dealing with the public
- Exchange of money, services, or goods
- Routine face-to-face contact with large numbers of people
- Working alone or in small numbers, late night
- Work in high crime areas
- Working in community-based settings

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## FACTORS Cont.

- Late night or early morning hours
- Work in high crime areas
- Guarding valuable property
- Working in community-based settings

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## Employment Factors

- Understaffing that leads to job overload or compulsory overtime.
- Frustrations arising from poorly defined job tasks and responsibilities.
- Downsizing or reorganization
- Labor disputes & poor labor-management relations.

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## Employment Factors

- Poor mngrt styles (ex; arbitrary or unexplained orders; over-monitoring, reprimands in front of others, inconsistent discipline)
- Inadequate security or a poorly trained, poorly motivated security force.
- A lack of employee counseling.
- A high injury rate or frequent grievances may be clues to problem situations

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## WHAT CAN BE DONE ?

- Violence Prevention Program
- Encourage Reporting of Incidents
- Employee Training
- Screening
- Be Proactive

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## PROACTIVE PREVENTION METHODS

- Recognize that problem exists
- Locked drop safe
- Small amounts of money, ATM, Debit
- Buzzer

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## PROACTIVE Cont.

- Bullet-proof barriers
- Close during high risk hours
- Height of receptionist desk
- Visibility & Lighting
- Escort

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## PROACTIVE Cont.

- Planter boxes
- Know exits from building
- Ease of entrance from outsiders
- Garbage & outdoor refrigerator placement



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## PERPETRATOR PROFILE

- Male
- White
- Middle Aged
- Loner
- Self esteem depends on work
- Few other interests than work



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## PROFILE Cont.

- Blames others for disappointments
- History of conflict
- Disobeys company procedure
- Recently laid off
- Owns weapons/Fascination
- Political extremist

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## WARNING SIGNS

- Changes from usual behavior
- Poor hygiene
- Chronically poor work performance
- Unfounded grievances & complaints
- Conflicts w/supervisors or other emps

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## WARNING SIGNS Cont.

- Attendance problems (tardy, absent)
- Abuse of sick leave
- View self as the victim
- Noted anxiety & irritability
- Mention of sleep disturbances

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## WARNING SIGNS Cont.

- Depression, withdrawal, & comments about suicide
- Obsessive behavior (drinking, drug use, religion, sex, etc.)
- Sexual probs. including harassing behavior
- Excess arguments or fights w/others
- Home problems

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## DIFFERENCE IN THE SEXES

- Men do more violent acts
- Women destroy things

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## BEFORE TERMINATION

- Watch for behavior changes
- Verify situation
- Document problems
- Confront individual

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## TERMINATING AN EMPLOYEE

- Beginning or end of a shift
- Do not allow the employee to return to work area
- State as a fact



## TERMINATING Cont.

- Have paperwork ready
- Preserve dignity
- Security on call, if necessary



## SECURITY MEASURES

- Security on premises before & after hours
- Separate main work area
- Limited access for employees & visitors
- Panic buttons
- Security
- Training



## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SPILLOVER

- Women usually victim
- Majority husband/wife incidents
- On company property, your problem
- Embarrassment



## EFFECTS ON EMPLOYEE

- Usually doesn't speak of the problem
- Decreased productivity, lose promotions
- Diminish the severity
- Often fired



## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Distribute photo
- Receptionist has them wait
- Call security/police
- Get them out of building
- Don't have receptionist do bargaining
- If they come in - they've crossed the line



## STALKING STAGES

- Mental obsession
- Surveillance
- Harassment
- Extermination

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## MENTAL OBSESSION

- When you 1st meet someone
- Can't get you out of my head
- Stalker can't move on
- How could you do this to me?

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## SURVEILLANCE

- 1st outward expression of obsession
- Need to know about your life
- Little things - redial, send letters

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## HARASSMENT

- Where people get trapped
- POSITIVE
  - flattering, good for ego
  - Give gifts
  - Comes on too strong
  - Even though you say no, they persist

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## HARASSMENT Cont.

- NEGATIVE
  - How could you do this after all I've done for you?
  - Excuse to get near you
  - Faxes (send from different locations)
  - Send 1,000 pizza's
  - Hang ups
  - Send letters
- Don't accept gifts

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## EXTERMINATION

- "I can't live without you and I can't let you live without me."

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## WHAT TO DO

- Change your routine
- Shrink your comfort zone
- Offer EAP assistance
- Have a policy - avoid pulling in others
- Don't trust everything victim tells you
- Don't talk to non-involved about situation

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## TYPES OF THREATS

- Direct
- Conditional
- Veiled - most frequent

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## VEILED THREATS

- Say it's a joke
- Most don't say anything to spare feelings
- Treat like sexual harassment policy
- Nothing done - increases potential for more

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## INTERNAL THREATS

- Poses an immediate threat
- You'll call them
- Have procedures in writing
- Violence assessment
- Mandatory counseling
- Fitness for duty

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## EXTERNAL THREAT

- Specific rules
- When to term. a phone call
- When to ask them to leave
- Written policy on what is tolerated
- Post policy in reception area
- Use defuse techniques

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## HANDLING THREATS

- Immediate Danger
  - Leave the area
  - Don't try to control violent person
  - Call 911
  - Notify co-workers

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## HANDLING THREATS Cont.

- Threats, No Immediate Danger
  - Notify management/security
  - Keep away from threatening person
  - Know escape route
  - Other protective measures
- Violence not given consequences will continue or increase

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## AVOID BECOMING A VICTIM

- Don't scream or get petrified, get quiet and get down
- Standing = target
- Run
- Barriers
- Clear under the desk
- Stay where you are if perp. not around

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## DEFUSING SITUATIONS

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## THE NEED TO DEFUSE

- Violence often preceded by threats
- Preceded by pushing or other physical contact



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## ROYAL OAK , MI

- 1991 Post Office Massacre

Gunman had warned co-workers that if he did not win his job back, he would make the office look like that in Edmund, OK.



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## EMOTIONS IN A SITUATION

- Anger
- Fear
- Embarrassment
- Prejudice

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## COMPENSATING BEHAVIORS

- Hesitation
- Verbal abuse
- Bluff
- Physical force

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## RULES

- Control yourself
- Mind controls everything
- Avoid compensating behaviors
- You're in the driver's seat

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## REASONS PEOPLE'S ANGER SURFACES

- Intentions & goals are thwarted
- Insufficient financial reserves
- Feeling threatened
- Feeling betrayed
- Reduction of needed & expected resources



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## ANGER SURFACING cont.

- Politics
- Releasing pain
- Controlled feelings of rage
- Free-floating hostility
- Using manipulation to get their way



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## OBSERVE AS THEY APPROACH

- Hunched shoulders
- Clenched fists
- Red face
- Fidgeting & restlessness
- Staring or avoidance of eye contact
- Rapid movements



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## DEALING WITH AN ANGRY CUSTOMER

- Acknowledge the persons anger
- Source of their anger is typically not you
- Relate with them somehow
- Think of your worst day
- Apologize even if you're right



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## MIND & BODY ARE ONE

- Concentrate one thing at a time
- Think problems all the way through
- Flexible minds avoid conflict
- Lying = 5 min. agitation
- Truth = stay agitated

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## AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR

- Speak in a friendly manner
- Greet the person properly
- When possible use their name
- Listen carefully, paraphrase back
- Don't use the words "it's our policy"
- Never say, "I only work here" or "I'm following the rules"

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## HOSTILE BAIT

- "If you really cared about my welfare, you would give me my check"
- "You guys in government are lazy & overpaid"
- I bet if I wasn't [ethnic group], you would give me..."
- "Your company has dropped the ball on investigating my fraudulent claims"

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## RESISTING THE BAIT

- Ask a disrupting question
  - When did you start thinking that ...?
- Detached response
  - It's interesting that some people think that...
  - Many people think that

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## NEGATIVE LANGUAGE

- Tells person what can't be done
- Has a subtle tone of blame
- Uses can't, won't, unable to; to say what the company can't do
- Doesn't stress positive actions or positive consequences

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### SUGGESTIONS OF CARLESSNESS

- You neglected to specify...
- You failed to include...
- You overlooked enclosing...

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### SUGGESTIONS THAT THE PERSON IS LYING

- You claim that...
- You say that...
- You state that...

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### IMPLY THAT THE PERSON IS NOT TOO BRIGHT

- We cannot see how you...
- We fail to understand...
- We are at a loss to know...

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### IMPLIES COERCION OR PRESSURE

- You should...
- You ought to...
- You must...
- We must ask you to...
- We must insist...

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### SARCASTIC OR PATRONIZING

- No doubt...
- We will thank you to...
- You understand, of course...
- Please respond soon...

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### POSITIVE LANGUAGE

- Tells the person what can be done
- Suggests alternatives & choices available
- Sounds helpful & encouraging
- Stresses positive actions & consequences

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## POSITIVE PHRASES

- If you can send us... we can complete the process for you
- The info. we have suggests that you have a different viewpoint on this issue. Let me explain our perspective.
- Might we suggest that you...
- One option for you is...
- We can help you to ... if you send us...

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## PLANNING AHEAD

- Know your reactions & weaknesses
- Think through situations
- Control yourself
- Don't say the 1st thing that comes to mind

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## PLANNING AHEAD Cont.

- Observe & respond
- Be sincere
- Remain professional, not personal
- Remain safe & focus on improving situation

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## REDIRECTING BEHAVIOR

- Make a connection
- What do they want
- What will help
- Don't expect them to be rational
- Ask for their help
- Give options

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## SIX TECHNIQUES TO USE ON ANGRY PEOPLE

- Slow them down
- Interrupt on a key point, get them thinking
- Open ended questions
- Re-label feelings, calm voice
- Alternate points of view
- Set limits of what you can do

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## SITUATIONS

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## PATTERN FOR DEFUSING

- Deal with feelings first
- Move to issues
- Work to solve the problem
- Go back to the feelings at the end
- Make sure they are feeling good about the situation

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[www.funnyplace.org](http://www.funnyplace.org)

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Thank You!

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